



Representative **Kirk Pearson • 39th District**



2003 Session Highlights

Protecting taxpayers, providing jobs, preserving public safety

October 2003

Dear Neighbors,

The Legislature adjourned in June after 105 days in the regular session and two subsequent special sessions.

Although our greatest challenge was closing a state operating budget deficit of more than \$2.7 billion, our greatest opportunity was to work for a stronger economy that will preserve existing jobs and bring new businesses and jobs back to Washington.

We approved a no-new-taxes budget that preserves vital services and protects those most in need. We provided for smaller class sizes and salary increases for beginning teachers, adopted tax relief that will grow our economy and jobs, and worked to enhance public safety, including protecting the integrity of the state's "Three Strikes" law. This newsletter provides a brief review of major legislation in the 2003 session – the successes and disappointments.

Again, thank you for your phone calls, letters, cards, e-mail, and support. Your input is valuable to me and has helped us to make progress on issues important to families throughout the 39th District.

Please feel free to contact me any time you have questions or comments. Thank you for the honor of allowing me to serve you.

Sincerely,

Kirk Pearson • State Representative

House Committees:

Appropriations - *Assistant ranking member*
Criminal Justice & Corrections
Fisheries, Ecology & Parks
Rules

No-new-taxes budget

Providing for vital services while making government live within its means

Facing a \$2.7 billion operating budget shortfall going into the 2003 session, many people were doubtful that such a large deficit could be addressed without raising taxes. However, with people losing their jobs, unemployment rates hovering at 7 percent, and an economy that is still very uncertain, now is not the time to be raising taxes.

Instead, I felt it was our responsibility to develop a budget that makes government live within its means, without shifting the burden to families and businesses.

The budget we passed focused our limited resources on the most pressing priorities – maintaining vital services, providing for our children's education, and protecting our state's most vulnerable.

We were able to maintain health coverage for low-income children and avoid deep reductions in services for the developmentally disabled and troubled youth.



We also maintained health care coverage for 100,000 low-income citizens on the Basic Health Plan, and provided for county health departments.

We increased pay for teachers in their first seven years, boosted per student funding for class-size reduction to \$254, up from \$212, and gave home health-care workers a 75-cent-per-hour pay raise.

We would have liked to have done more for teachers, health care workers and state employees. Unfortunately, the budget is a reflection of our tight economic times.

However, on the positive side, by balancing this budget without new taxes, we position Washington for a quicker economic recovery and job creation.

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Creating jobs and getting Washington working again

If we are to prevent future budget deficits, our first order of business must be getting our economy back on the road to recovery. More than 160,000 people have lost their jobs in the past three years. Many of those people live within the 39th District.

One of my top priorities of the session was to push for legislation that would provide for a strong economy in Washington and get people working again. During the



special sessions in June, we worked on reforming the unemployment tax system and providing incentives for Boeing to build the new 7E7 in our state.

TAX RELIEF FOR JOBS

We approved tax breaks for Boeing that will be implemented only if it decides to build the 7E7 in Washington. In addition, we provided a three-year period of modest tax relief (Senate Bill 5071) targeted to save jobs at B.F. Goodrich Aviation Technical Services in Everett.

MUNICIPAL TAX RELIEF

I co-sponsored legislation reducing the amount of business and occupation (B&O) taxes that cities can charge business. The bill, which was signed into law, allows cities to charge B&O taxes only on the amount of business conducted within city limits. It's expected businesses will save about \$30 million a year as a result of this bill. That savings will help businesses to expand and create more jobs.

Helping our troops

Many of our young people are still overseas fighting for freedom and against terrorism. Some had very little notice before they were called to leave for overseas. The state's Residential Landlord-Tenant Act requires 20 days notice before a month-to-month tenancy is terminated. This can be very difficult for those enlisted in the military who are renting an apartment. The Legislature approved and I supported a measure that allows tenancy to be terminated upon receipt of deployment or reassignment orders.

Unemployment rates - September 2003

Not seasonally adjusted

Snohomish County - 8.5 percent

Skagit County - 7 percent

King County - 6.6 percent

Whatcom County - 5.9 percent

Statewide - 7.0 percent

United States - 5.8 percent

Source: Washington State Employment Security

Providing seniors with meaningful prescription drug assistance

I was pleased to support legislation that will provide meaningful relief to many of our low-income seniors and disabled citizens.

Among other things, the plan, which was approved by the Legislature, directs the state's Health Care Authority to negotiate price discounts for Washington residents 50 and older or disabled with income up to 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Level and lacking prescription drug coverage. Discounts may not be at the expense of retail pharmacies.

The bill will help to ensure that low-income citizens can get the prescription drugs they need at prices they can afford.



Rep. Kirk Pearson speaks in the House of Representatives about the need for senior citizen prescription drug assistance.

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Preserving public safety

This year, I was privileged to be appointed to the House Criminal Justice and Corrections Committee where several bills of local and statewide significance were considered.

Making meth manufacturing a strike

In January, more than 1,000 people attended a meeting in Granite Falls to voice their frustration with the problem of local methamphetamine labs. It was encouraging to me to see a community come together to fight a serious problem. Our state has gone from having 38 illegal meth labs in 1990 to 1,886 in 2001. The saddest part is that children are present at nearly half of these hazardous chemical environments. It's a problem that exists in all rural parts of our state.

I co-sponsored legislation this year along with my fellow 39th District legislator, Rep. Dan Kristiansen, that would have increased prison terms for meth manufacturers to 20 years. It would have also made meth manufacturing a strike under the state's "Three Strikes" law. The measure passed the House Criminal Justice and Corrections Committee, but later died in the House. I vow to continue the fight in the coming 2004 session to stem the tide of this horrible crime wave.

Assault against "Three Strikes" law locked up

In 1993, Washington voters overwhelmingly supported creation of the nation's first "Three Strikes" policy with more than 76 percent of the vote. Voters were clear that they wanted the state to get tough on career criminals. Over the years, this law has helped drive down crime rates and has become a proven deterrent.

This year, legislation was introduced that would have weakened the law by eliminating two crimes on the Three Strikes list: second degree robbery and certain elements of second degree assault. It would have allowed 138 career criminals to be released early from prison.

I helped to lead a fight against this assault on the Three Strikes law. We notified the press and publicly voted no in the House Criminal Justice and Corrections Committee. The subsequent pressure of the publicity against this assault convinced House leaders to lock up the bill. We hope it stays locked up for good!

"No more essential duty of government exists than the protection of the lives of its people."

Judge Francis T. Murphy

Sex offender list would protect children

The purpose of sex offender notification is to allow people to be aware and take precautions to protect themselves. Under current law, if a sex offender moves into your neighborhood, local law enforcement officials are required to notify you. However, no method exists under the law to allow parents to become aware of whether their children are in the same classroom with a registered sex offender.

I introduced House Bill 1237 this year as a means to help parents keep their children safe in schools. The bill sought to allow school employees,

parents and students to obtain a list of juvenile sex offenders attending local schools. Nearly 150 public school students in Washington are registered sex offenders. Unfortunately, the measure did not advance through the Legislature. I still believe strongly in this public safety measure and will continue working on it next year.



Anti-terrorism legislation

As a sponsor of legislation last year to crack down on eco-terrorism, I was pleased this year to support a state anti-terrorism bill to back up federal homeland security laws. Unfortunately, this issue got caught up in some political wrangling and did not pass the Legislature. We will make another try in the coming session to help protect our state against all forms of terrorism.

Representative **KIRK PEARSON** • 39th District

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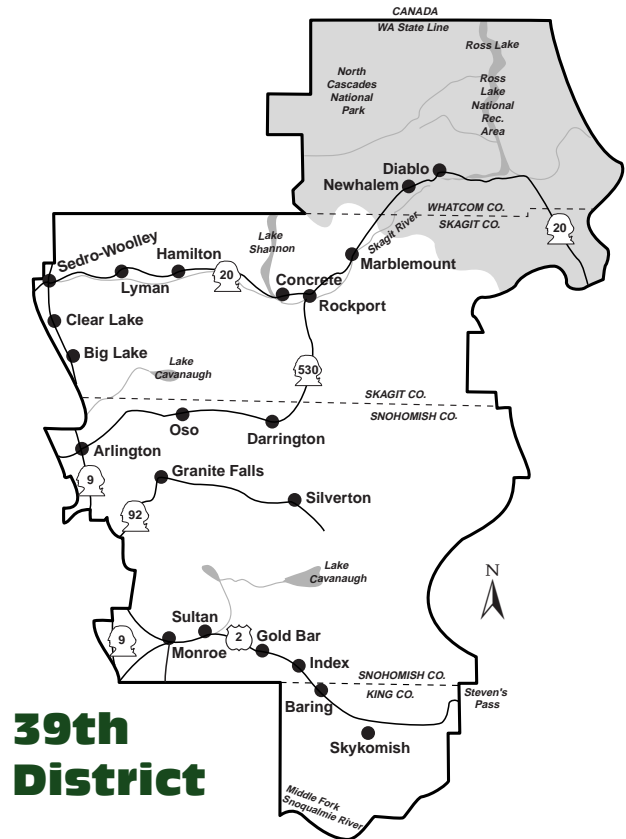
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Toll-free legislative hotline: 1-800-562-6000

Visit the 39th district office!

I recently opened a new district office in Sedro-Woolley to help serve local residents. It is staffed by my legislative assistant, Mike Pierce. Office hours are from: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Living in Monroe and having an office up north helps me to cover all of the district. If you have any questions, comments, or ideas about legislation or state government, I invite you to call or drop by my office. You can also send a letter using my mailing address above.



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